

The effects of shame on prosocial behavior: A systematic review and three-level meta-analysis

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Abstract: Shame is a typical moral emotion, and its effects on prosocial behavior have been inconsistent in previous studies. In this study, a three-level meta-analysis technique was used for the first time to integrate relevant empirical studies to examine the effects of shame on prosocial behavior and the moderating variables in the relationship. Through literature search and screening, a total of 26 literatures with 85 effect sizes were included, and the total sample size was 5823 participants. The main effect test found that the shame group showed more prosocial behavior than the control group, which means shame can promote the generation of prosocial behavior. The moderating effect test showed that the moderating effect of generation situation of prosocial behavior (exposure situation or masking situation) was significant, that is, shame could promote more prosocial behavior in the exposure situation than in the masking situation. While the moderating effects of those variables including age, cultural background, shame-induced method, the type of shame, and the type of prosocial behavior were not significant. The use of three-level meta-analysis in this study ensured the integrity of the included literature information, so as to draw more comprehensive and reliable conclusions on the effects of shame on prosocial behavior and the role of moderating variables in the relationship between the two. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between shame and prosocial behavior and the moderating mechanisms. Subsequent research could further explore the role of cognitive factors and individual characteristics in the influence of shame on prosocial behavior, and investigate the differences between the effects of shame and other moral emotions on prosocial behavior.

Keywords: shame, prosocial behavior, three-level meta-analysis, moderating effect